



# Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus Type 2 (RHDV2)

## WHAT IS RABBIT HEMORRHAGIC DISEASE?

Rabbit hemorrhagic disease is a highly infectious, reportable, and fatal animal disease caused by rabbit hemorrhagic disease virus type 2 (RHDV2). RHDV2 affects domestic and wild rabbits, hares, and pikas. It is not currently known to infect humans or other non-rabbit species. Suspected cases of rabbit hemorrhagic disease should be reported immediately to the Alabama State Veterinarian's office at (334) 240-7253.

**USDA CURRENT RHDV2 OUTBREAK MAP:** [www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/maps/animal-health/rhd](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/maps/animal-health/rhd)

## WHAT ARE THE CLINICAL SIGNS OF RABBIT HEMORRHAGIC DISEASE?

Often the only sign of rabbit hemorrhagic disease is sudden death, with a mortality rate ranging between 50-70 percent. RHDV2 attacks liver cells, causing hepatitis. It can also create internal bleeding and lesions in other organs, leading to systemic inflammation and bleeding from the nose and mouth. Affected animals may experience decreased appetite, fever, lethargy, difficulty breathing, and/or neurological symptoms, often followed by sudden death.

## HOW DOES RABBIT HEMORRHAGIC DISEASE SPREAD?

The incubation period of the virus is 3 - 9 days, and the virus can live for up to 105 days in the environment, even in extreme conditions. It may be spread to healthy rabbits through contact with infected rabbits or carcasses, contaminated food or water or bedding, or other materials the rabbits encounter. People may inadvertently spread the virus via their hands, clothes, or shoes.

## HOW CAN I PREVENT THE SPREAD?

The best way to prevent the spread of rabbit hemorrhagic disease is to practice good biosecurity measures.

### RABBIT OWNERS SHOULD:

- Separate domestic rabbits from other pets, livestock, and wild animals.
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect surfaces and equipment used for rabbit care.
- Thoroughly wash hands, clothes, and shoes before and after contact with domestic rabbits.
- Dedicate shoes to be worn only in rabbit housing.
- Quarantine newly-acquired domestic rabbits for at least 30 days from other animals.
- Do not handle dead wild rabbits.

### HUNTERS SHOULD:

- Wear gloves and disinfect equipment and hands after field dressing wild rabbits.
- Bury any remains onsite to reduce scavenging. Meat from healthy animals is safe for human consumption if dressed and cooked properly.



**Notify the State Veterinarian's office if you experience high mortality or sudden deaths in your rabbitry at (334) 240-7253.**